NORTHWEST
NURSERY
IMPROVEMENT
INSTITUTE

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November 2, 2005

Michael Johanns,
Secretary of Agriculture
US Department of Agriculture
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Johanns:

The apples Gala, Braeburn, Pink Lady, Fuji, and Granny Smith can be purchased in most grocery stores. Perhaps you've had them and like them. Many of those are grown right here in Eastern Washington. However, these varieties originated outside this country. They all passed through extensive quarantine testing and treatment procedures to exclude exotic pests before our growers could produce them and compete with other countries in domestic and international markets. The quarantine center where they entered the country is near here in the Yakima Valley. This center serves, not only as an access facility for new varieties from around the world, but it is also the foundation for pathogen tested planting stock for our country's orchards.

This enterprise of testing so international trade can happen and so pathogen-free planting stock of fruit trees are available for this country's orchards is a working relationship between growers, nurserymen, state departments of agriculture, land grant universities, and the federal government. It is a partnership that has functioned well for 50 years. Unfortunately, the federal side is opting out of the partnership. Its funds for this purpose are scheduled to terminate in a couple of years.

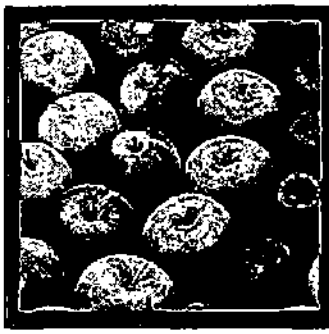
This situation has alarmed leaders of both the nursery and the fruit production industries. As a result, the fruit tree and grapevine industries and research scientists joined positions to request permanent funding for what we call the National Clean Plant Network. Attached is a bulletin that describes the problem and the proposed solution. This initiative is considered a high priority in the National Grape and Wine Initiative, the Tree Fruit Technology Roadmap, and the National Berry Crop Initiative. Please work to establish and secure funds for this proposal. Millions of dollars of trade and potential pest outbreaks lie in the balance.

Our contact person in the Department of Agriculture for this effort is Tom Bewick, National Program Leader, Horticulture, USDA-CSREES. If you have questions about the status of this proposal, please contact him or, also, feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Bill Howell

Bill Howell
Executive Director& Manager



NATIONAL CLEAN PLANT NETWORK
(FOR FRUIT TREES , NUT TREES & GRAPEVINES)

For Healthy Food, Farms, and Communities

Clean plant programs provide propagation material that is free of virus-like agents. Programs in the United States are in jeopardy as funding for these service activities declines. Immediate action is needed to:

- Secure a national funding base for the delivery of diagnostic & virus elimination services to the temperate fruit, nut and grape industries
- Distribute funds to key centers of expertise such as the National Program For Controlling Virus Diseases Of Temperate Fruit Tree Crops (NRSP5/IR2) at Washington State University, Prosser, WA, & the Foundation Plant Services (FPS) program at University of California, Davis, CA, and to blocks of elite virus-tested plant material in sites located strategically throughout the country
- Create an industry/scientist advisory board with national representation

The issue:

- As funds are decreasing, the few remaining clean planting stock programs in the USA are struggling to maintain services for our farming industry
- Necessary testing procedures are becoming more sophisticated and more expensive

Clean plant programs help support:

- Secure, safe, high quality, & affordable food supply for the USA
- Internationally competitive, economically viable, and environmentally sustainable agriculture
- Thriving rural communities
- Protection for our country from economic and exotic plant pests and pathogens that could threaten our food supply

Economic benefits:

- For fruit tree crops alone, clean plant programs potentially contribute over $27,000,000 annually to the country's economy in the form of reduced grower losses and increased availability of fresh fruit to the consumer (Source: Cebali, *et al. 2002. Crop Protection 22:1149*).
- An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure – clean plant programs are preventative in nature. Should a disease outbreak occur, control measures become very expensive. For example, local farm economies were crippled and over $40,000,000 were expended during the first three years of the effort to rid the country of plum pox virus (source: Don Albrecht, USDA-APHIS).

NATIONAL CLEAN PLANT NETWORK

(FOR FRUIT TREE, NUT TREES AND GRAPEVINES)

The proposed network to provide virus-tested propagation material for perennial horticultural crops would include:

- NRSP5 at Washington State University, Prosser and FPS at University of California, Davis – these programs will function as primary post-entry quarantine sites, and will conduct virus elimination and most virus testing of material from foreign and domestic sources
- Direct participation of all regions of the USA is expected to provide governance
- Blocks of elite plant material will be established in different areas of the USA to serve regional interests and needs. Multiple blocks of elite material also provide resilience should unforeseen situations arise.
  - A revitalized Northwest Grape Foundation Service located at Washington State University will be integrated into the partnership
  - Pennsylvania State University has made a commitment to a grapevine foundation program; University of Maryland is a partner in this block
  - Clemson University is committed to establishing a regional fruit tree foundation block. The University currently operates a clean stock tested program in partnership with growers in South Carolina and Georgia and nurseries in Tennessee.
- INDUSTRY WILL CONTINUE TO CONTRIBUTE $2,705,000 ANNUALLY to clean stock programs through user fees and contributions to State-managed certification programs via commodity check-offs

Federal funding request • elements for a strong, national program:

- Funding to assist in the establishment of blocks of elite propagation material
- On-going cooperative funding base to support elite stock program operations
- A USDA-CSREES Special Grants program to encourage the advancement of diagnostic and virus elimination technologies that are the foundation of these programs

Years 1 & 2: Establishment phase

Operation of existing virus testing and elimination programs; establishment of regional elite stock programs	$2,500,000
USDA-CSREES Special Research Grant Program for research to enhance the detection of plant viruses of temperate fruit trees, nuts and grapevines, and to develop improved methods of virus elimination	$600,000
TOTAL FEDERAL REQUEST: Enhancement of USDA-CSREES budget	**$3,100,000**

Subsequent years: Operational phase

Operation of existing virus testing and elimination programs and foundation blocks	$2,074,000
USDA-CSREES Special Research Grant Program for research to enhance the detection of plant viruses of temperate fruit trees, nuts and grapevines, and to develop improved methods of virus elimination	$600,000
TOTAL FEDERAL REQUEST: Enhancement of USDA-CSREES budget	**$2,674,000**